

Preface: *Responding to the Call of Faith and Reason*

A little less than a year ago John Paul II issued his encyclical on the relationship between faith and reason, reminding us that philosophy is "one of the noblest of human tasks," and calling on philosophers to address a range of difficult problems, including daunting metaphysical problems. This issue of Logos features a set of philosophical essays that address some of the problems the Pope had in mind. Philosophy's commitment to governance by reason fits it to play an essential role in contemporary discussions of religion; this issue of Logos is not the last to offer readers a spread of interesting and accessible philosophical papers that respond to the Pope's call.

In "Death of the (Hand)maiden: Contemporary Philosophy in Faith and Reason," J. L. A. Garcia comments on the Pope's dismissal of the traditional image of philosophy as the handmaiden of theology and insistence that philosophy, important in its own right, has an autonomy that must be preserved. Garcia notes that although philosophy must remain committed to its own principles, principles of reason rather than revelation, faith has aids to offer philosophy, including confidence in reality and being, confidence that we can understand the world, and caution against a presumption that obscures truth. Garcia ends his essay—as John Paul ends his encyclical—with reference to Mary, "a lucid image of true philosophy," in the Pope's words. Philosophers these days may be taken aback by the picture; it is still not uncommon for rationality, a defining virtue of the philosopher, to be regarded as distinctively masculine. As Garcia indicates, however, philosophy needs the discipline of virtues especially associated with Mary: "receptivity to truth and being, submission of mind to the greater reality beyond and about it, and obedience of will in following the truth where it leads, however uncomfortable, however humbling." These Marian virtues produce strength, perseverance, and courage in the philosopher's quest for truth.

The annunciation is paradigmatic for understanding receptivity to truth, submission of mind to a greater reality, and humble obedience to truth; and thus we choose it for our cover image. Philosophy may no longer be (merely) a handmaiden to theology, but Christian philosophers are ultimately servants of the God who has placed in our hearts a desire to understand truth, and given us the faculty of reason, with which we may approach truth. "Behold the handmaid of the Lord," Mary says to the angel Gabriel.

We're pleased to offer readers a debate on "Theories of Truth" between two leading philosophers, Richard Rorty and John Searle. Theories of truth—theories about what it means to say that some statement is true or false—have been a part of philosophy since its inception, and are closely tied to some of the metaphysical problems John Paul cites as particularly urgent.

Searle defends the "correspondence theory of truth," which holds that to state the truth is to say of that which is that it is, and of that which is not that it is not, as Aristotle, one of the theory's early advocates, put it. This may seem tautologous, but one who endorses the correspondence theory of truth holds that the apparent tautology is theoretically interesting. Rorty rejects the correspondence theory, defending instead a "pragmatist"

account of truth, an account with roots going back to Protagoras, whose proponents include the American philosophers William James and John Dewey. Pragmatists focus on the fact that true beliefs are useful; they take the characteristic of usefulness to display the nature of truth.

Woven throughout Rorty and Searle's interchange are intriguing reflections on cultural pluralism, postmodernism, the NEH, the purpose of a university, and the state of the academy; their observations on these topics alone make the debate worth reading. But what difference does it make, in the end, which account of truth one accepts? Interestingly, Rorty and Searle don't agree on the significance of the main issue they debate. Rorty thinks the debate over truth has little relevance to larger cultural issues. The question of whether the correspondence theory is correct is, he suggests, analogous to the question of whether Christ is really present in the Eucharist (neither question is all that important on his antirealist view). Readers may decide that they will accept Rorty's claim that whether the correspondence theory is correct is no more significant than whether Christ is really present in the Eucharist, but draw a rather different conclusion than Rorty's about the import of the analogy. Searle defends a realist conception of truth that proponents of an Aristotelian-Thomistic metaphysics will find congenial. He thinks far-reaching consequences attach to a decision to accept or reject the correspondence theory of truth.

We also take special pleasure in offering an essay by G. E. M. Anscombe on "Practical Truth." Anscombe, perhaps the most eminent Catholic philosopher now living, here finds it valuable to reflect on Aristotle's notion of practical truth. (This notion is not, we should observe, a "pragmatist" concept in the sense in which Rorty uses the term.) She offers a challenging explication of the Aristotelian understanding of the truth that is brought about in sound deliberation leading to decision and action. Aristotle's notion of practical truth may be of special interest to those who hold that Christ is Truth and that "The disciple of Christ consents to 'live in the truth'" (as the Catechism puts it).

Is assisted suicide ever permissible? That is the question Thomas D. Sullivan poses in "Assisted Suicide and Assisted Torture." Sullivan does not dispute the controversial claim that in some circumstances an individual's suffering may be so great that non-existence would be preferable to existence. But he argues it does not follow that suicide can be rational and morally permissible. Why not? Because the most plausible of the common philosophical justifications for assisted suicide has an unsettling consequence: it turns out to legitimate assisted torture. Should we then accept the claim that both assisted suicide and assisted torture are justifiable? Philosophy may provide no convincing answer to this question, Sullivan suggests; it may be that revelation alone settles the matter. Sullivan thus uses philosophical argument to explore the limits of philosophical inquiry.

Sullivan takes care to criticize the claim that there is no significant moral difference between refraining from giving aid with the expectation that a person's death will be hastened and intentionally killing the person. Like Anscombe (and Aristotle, whom Anscombe explicates), Sullivan places great weight on the significance of intentional

action. The reader will note various ways in which the positions of Garcia, Searle, Anscombe, and Sullivan overlap.

A set of literary and theological essays completes this issue of Logos (the reader may, if so inclined, identify points of contact with philosophy in each of these literary and theological essays).

William T. Cavanaugh's "Absolute Moral Norms and Human Suffering: An Apocalyptic Reading of Endo's Silence" uses John Paul II's encyclical *Veritatis Splendor* to reflect on the dilemma of Endo's seventeenth-century Portuguese Jesuit Sebastian Rodrigues, who faces martyrdom in Japan. Rodrigues's terrible dilemma arises when instead of torturing him, his captor threatens to torture three peasants until Rodrigues apostatizes by publicly treading on the *fumie*, a representation of the face of Christ (a plate on p. 96 of this issue contains a photograph of a *fumie*). Cavanaugh's nuanced defense of absolute moral norms (such as the prohibition of apostasy), developed through his reflection on Endo's narrative, complements Sullivan's philosophical exploration of the ground of the absolute injunction against intentionally killing the innocent.

Maria Poggi Johnson discusses two novels, one by the Anglican clergyman Charles Kingsley (*Hypatia*) and the other by John Henry Newman (*Callista*), in "New Foes and Old Faces: Fiction, Interpretation, and Integrity in Newman and Kingsley." The novels have certain features in common: both are set in the early years of Christianity; both are about beautiful young women who convert to Christianity shortly before meeting violent death; and both, Johnson suggests, "cast a fresh light on the more venomous exchanges of the 60's" between Newman and Kingsley. The novels help us understand these exchanges by raising questions about historical method and interpretation that were central to the dispute. Kingsley's novel was much better than Newman's, Johnson observes. However, she argues, Newman's *Apologia pro vita sua*, his extraordinarily vivid account of his own conversion, shows Newman's integrity as a Christian and as a historian and succeeds where *Callista* failed. And, we might add, despite Newman's notorious contempt for the "smart syllogisms" of the philosopher, the *Apologia* is a rich resource for those interested in philosophical arguments concerning the reliability of revelatory claims.

In "Pity, Fear, and Catharsis: Purging Millennial Fever," Kathleen Burk Henderson reflects on Aristotle's famous definition of tragedy "in the blue light of television times." Aristotle took the function of tragedy to be purgation of pity and fear, and understood imitation, the re-imagining of certain events, as essential to the process. Tragedy thus understood is, lamentably, absent from our lives, though violence and fear are not. If we are to achieve a rebirth of tragedy we must, Burk Henderson argues, surrender to fear and vulnerability, acknowledge a transcendent-ordering presence in the cosmos, undertake acts of imagination that penetrate the barriers separating us, and love one another as we love ourselves.

Michael Allen Mikolajczak's "'Something Understood': A Familiar Essay on Poetry, Prayer, and Helen C. White," is an appreciative introduction to the last of the pieces in this issue, Helen C. White's "Prayer and Poetry." Mikolajczak emphasizes White's claim that prayer and poetry both have their source in wonder, and he observes that wonder also

"informs philosophy and brings it into rapprochement with poetry." Whether a person is praying, or writing poetry, or writing philosophy, the intent is "a true apprehension of reality," and the source is "the wonder that lives in the responsive heart." Mikolajczak suggests that although White's discussion of the differences between poetry and prayer is important and useful, it does not do justice to the complexity of Christian prayer. For a sense of its complexity, he says, "we are best advised to take recourse to the Catechism, which tells us that prayer 'cannot be reduced to the spontaneous outpouring of interior impulse,' that it has wellsprings in scripture, the liturgy, the theological virtues, and the vicissitudes of daily life." Ultimately, it is Christ who "teaches us to pray, and he draws all into union with the Trinity, His mother, and the church."

Sandra Menssen
Co-Editor